

4. The Signs of Christ's Second Coming

Luke 21:5-11

The Second Coming of Christ and the End Times

Signs of the End of the Age

It was the Wednesday before the crucifixion, and the Lord Jesus wanted to encourage the hearts of the disciples by prophesying about what was ahead concerning the destruction of Jerusalem and His return in great power and glory. From early morning till nighttime, the Lord taught in the temple (Luke 21:37-38). After Jesus pronounced seven woes on the religious elite, Christ made His way through the eastern gate to the hill called the Mount of Olives, only a few hundred yards from the temple (Matthew 24:1). More than likely, the Lord slept in the Garden of Gethsemane so that in the early morning when the eastern gate was opened, He could teach those coming for the Passover. As they left the temple that Wednesday evening, the disciples noticed how beautiful Herod's Temple looked and how glorious it looked in the fading sunlight embedded with gold and precious stones. John the Apostle wrote that the temple building started forty-six years before Jesus' crucifixion (John 2:20) and was still many years from being fully completed. (It was finished seven years before being destroyed in 70 A.D.)

The temple and its courts were one of the wonders of the world. To view the temple from the Mount of Olives would have been a spectacular sight. As they headed east toward the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus spoke prophetically of the temple's destruction:

⁵Some of his disciples were remarking about how the temple was adorned with beautiful stones and with gifts dedicated to God. But Jesus said, ⁶"As for what you see here, the time will come when not one stone will be left on another; every one of them will be thrown down" (Luke 21:5-6).

Question 1) When the Jewish disciples heard these words about Herod's temple not having one stone left upon another, how do you think they may have reacted to this prophecy?

His reply was quite staggering to them. To hear that every temple stone would be thrown down had to be the end of the age as they knew it! Not that we should need confirmation of Jesus' words, but the prophet Micah also spoke of the destruction of Jerusalem and the reason for it, too:

⁹Hear this, you heads of the house of Jacob and rulers of the house of Israel, who detest justice and make crooked all that is straight, ¹⁰who build Zion with blood and Jerusalem with iniquity. ¹¹Its heads give judgment for a bribe; its priests teach for a price; its prophets practice divination for money; yet they lean on the LORD and say, "Is not the LORD in the midst of us? No disaster shall come upon us." ¹²Therefore because of you **Zion shall be plowed as a field; Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins**, and the mountain of the house a wooded height (Micah 3:9-12).

Not only was the temple destroyed by the Roman General Titus in 70 A.D., but Jerusalem was further demolished in 135 A.D. when the Roman Emperor Hadrian crushed a second Jewish rebellion seeking independence. Simon bar Kochba led the second revolt. Cassius Dio, a second-

century Roman historian, claimed that the Romans killed 580,000 Jews, and at that time, they destroyed Jerusalem and ran a plow over all or part of the city. All Jews were expelled and banned from returning to Jerusalem under a sentence of death.¹ Micah and Jesus' prophecy was fulfilled to the letter. When the words of Jesus sank into the hearts of the disciples, they asked Him to explain when this would take place and what would be the sign of His coming to rule and reign:

"Teacher," they asked, "when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are about to take place?" ⁸He replied: "Watch out that you are not deceived. For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am he,' and, 'The time is near.' Do not follow them. ⁹When you hear of wars and revolutions, do not be frightened. These things must happen first, but the end will not come right away." ¹⁰Then he said to them: "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. ¹¹There will be great earthquakes, famines and pestilences in various places, and fearful events and great signs from heaven" (Luke 21:7-11).

Three of the Gospel writers give us parts of the same talk by Jesus; they are found in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21. Matthew wrote that the disciples waited until they were seated together on the side of the Mount of Olives before they questioned Christ about His prophecy (Matthew 24:3). Matthew and Mark record two questions they asked Him: *"Tell us," they said, "When will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?"* (Matthew 24:3). Jesus' words in reply are the most extended answer to any question posed to the Lord. These two separate events are the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. and the events leading up to the return of Christ, which is already partly underway in our time. This writer believes that the second part of their question, *"What will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?"* (Matthew 24:3), speaks of a time that is mostly still ahead of us.

Early Warning Signs of the End.

We tend to view prophetic scriptures through our own experiences and what's happening in our country. As a young Christian in England in the early 1980s, I talked to a person about what I had learned about the second coming of Christ, hoping to lead him to Christ. His response was to ask me when this was all going to happen. I foolishly spoke far into the future, saying it couldn't last much beyond 1989. I have never put dates on things since. We hope the coming of the Lord will bring happier days in whatever difficulties we are going through in our personal lives and our country. Only the definite incidents spoken of in the Scriptures, events such as the Abomination of Desolation (Matthew 24:15-31) are those we can hold with a tight grip to know that Christ's coming is soon.

His first sign warning is of a time of great deception: *"Watch out that you are not deceived"* (v. 8). We are now living in that time of deceit. Our enemy, Satan, has individuals in place who have gained control in all types of influence in banking, politics, media, education, energy, and food and are promoting corrupt values and degrading deceptions that bring society to a new level of deterioration and decay. Our enemy is out to corrupt and control minds. This bent toward evil has been with us since the Fall of Man, and we are in a spiritual battle until the time that Christ returns. Believers in Christ should hold to the truth of Scripture and give no trust or confidence to the

¹ <http://www.aboutbibleprophecy.com/e31.htm>

manipulation devices of the enemy, the media, television, and the Internet. Our enemy is trained in psychological warfare and knows how to deceive our hearts and minds to do what he wants.

Not everything we see on T.V. is harmful, but we should regard with a healthy dose of skepticism anything on the airwaves; after all, that's why tel a vision has programs; it's all about the programming of the mind and the corrupting of godly values. All should be tested against the standard of God's Word. Decide what and who you will believe. The Scripture tells us not to accept the media but to test the spirits. We measure everything against the truth of God's word.

Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world (1 John 4:1).

Question 2) If deception is one of the early signs of the coming of Jesus, what things have you seen today that lead people away from a knowledge of God and His Word? Do you feel that the idea of truth is being attacked today? How?

The Lord then warned us about those who will come proclaiming they are the Christ (v. 8). This warning is undoubtedly a characteristic of the age in which we live. Many have already come proclaiming themselves as savior and thinking they alone have the answers to the world's problems. I am convinced that more is ahead. There will be one who will claim that he is God (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4) and will look to be worshiped as God.

Along with him, there will be a religious figure, a man doing signs and proclaiming himself a lamb, but inwardly having the heart and nature of a dragon. He will demand that the world leader, the Antichrist, should be worshiped:

¹¹Then I saw another beast, coming out of the earth. He had two horns like a lamb, but he spoke like a dragon. ¹²He exercised all the authority of the first beast on his behalf, and **made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast**, whose fatal wound had been healed. ¹³And he performed great and miraculous signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven to earth in full view of men. ¹⁴Because of the signs he was given power to do on behalf of the first beast, he deceived the inhabitants of the earth (Revelation 13:11-14).

Even though this man, called the False Prophet (Revelation 19:20), will perform great and miraculous signs, also causing fire to come down from heaven to earth, we must ignore such signs and hold to what is taught in the Word of God. It's interesting to know that scientists in Israel have already deployed what's called *The Iron Beam*, an air-defense laser weapon that can bring down drones, rockets, and planes.² If such a weapon can be put into space, such as that spoken of by President Ronald Reagan in his Star Wars vision in the 1980s, we can easily see that the scripture above can be fulfilled. We must not be deceived! Even though there will be those seeking to trick us into following them, Jesus tells us that this is still an early sign: **"These things must happen first, but the end will not come right away"** (v. 9).

Wars and Revolutions (v. 9).

² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1frHtUEqd4E>

Deception, false leaders, wars, and revolutions are all early warning signs. Jesus warned us that nation would rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom (Matthew 24:7). The statistics for those who died in the First World War is 31,508,200. For the Second World War, those who died amounted to 52,199,262. It could be, though, that the wars that scripture speaks of are yet ahead. We don't have enough information to determine at this point.³ Over eighty-three million people died from just those two world wars in the Twentieth Century; that's without the many other conflicts fought by various nations against one another. Evil people have designed wars to bring about great riches for the arms manufacturers and further put countries into debt. The Lord Jesus looked ahead into the future and told us that wars would be a sign of His soon coming. In the televised farewell address of President Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1961, he warned:

Now this conjunction of an immense military establishment and a large arms industry is new in the American experience. The total influence—economic, political, even spiritual—is felt in every city, every Statehouse, every office of the Federal government. We recognize the imperative need for this development. Yet, we must not fail to comprehend its grave implications. Our toil, resources, and livelihood are all involved. So is the very structure of our society.

In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist. We must never let the weight of this combination endanger our liberties or democratic processes. We should take nothing for granted. Only an alert and knowledgeable citizenry can compel the proper meshing of the huge industrial and military machinery of defense with our peaceful methods and goals, so that security and liberty may prosper together.⁴

During the Second World War, more than six million Jewish people were killed by the Nazis. This war brought about the return of the Jewish people to their ancient homeland of Israel, another sign of the last days because the prophet Ezekiel spoke of the Jewish people returning to the land in his vision of the Valley of Dry Bones (Ezekiel 37:1-14). In the following two chapters (Ezekiel 38-39), the prophet spoke of an alliance of nations that would make an attack on Israel after the reconstitution of Jewish people to their land. Since the nation's birth in 1948, the Jewish people have fought five significant wars, i.e., 1948, 1956, 1967, 1973, and 1982. This is not to infer that Jesus was speaking about wars being a sign just in the nation of Israel. The prophetic signs spoken by Jesus are world events (Luke 21:35), but Israel has certainly had her share of wars and revolutions.

The Lord said that there would not only be wars but also revolutions (Luke 21:9). When then Prime minister of Israel, Ariel Sharon, controversially visited the Temple Mount on September 28, 2000, to pray as a Jew on their holiest site, the Palestinians rose up in revolution. Even though Jerusalem was recaptured from Jordan in 1967, the Temple Mount is still in Muslim hands. This act by Sharon started what is called the Second Intifada. Some Palestinian representatives dismiss Ariel Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount as the reason for the Intifada; instead, they feel that the catalyst for the violence was the breakdown of the Camp David negotiations on July 25, 2000. This uprising or revolution in Israel is only one of many that have happened in recent years. All

³ Statistics are taken from the BBC website: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/h2g2/A2854730>

⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eisenhower%27s_farewell_address

over the world, we hear of unrest that will likely be nurtured into revolution, just as Jesus prophesied that such things would signify the soon-coming end of the age. The word *revolutions* are a translation of the Greek word, *Akatastatos*. It means:

A fixed or settled condition, the establishing or settling of something. Commotion, tumult, unruliness, disruption, disorder. It is used of political or social revolution, insurrection, sedition, riot, uprising, and disturbance.⁵

We are now facing times of revolution against the accepted political order of all nations. The world is and will be in turmoil and is all part of our enemy's plan to bring chaos, fear, civil disturbance, and political revolution.

In such a chaotic climate, our enemy can use fear to control the earth's population much more easily for one man, the Antichrist, to rule over a one-world government over the whole earth. Dr. Paul-Henri Spaak, first president of the United Nations General Assembly and architect of the United Nations and the New World Order, spoke of the world's desire for a man to rule the world in the following words:

We do not want another committee; we have too many already. What we want is a man of sufficient stature to hold the allegiance of all people, and to lift us out of the economic morass into which we are sinking. Send us such a man and be he god or devil, we will receive him.⁶

Famine Conditions Ahead

Luke then went on to tell us that Jesus also spoke about earthquakes, famines, and pestilences happening to the human race, along with fearful events and great signs from heaven:

There will be great earthquakes, famines and pestilences in various places, and fearful events and great signs from heaven” (Luke 21:11).

What will cause famines on the earth, I wonder? I believe the enemy learned from what happened in Egypt and how Pharaoh managed to get control of all the land. God warned Joseph and Pharaoh ahead of time that there would be seven years of great land fertility, followed by seven years of drought conditions. Joseph was given great wisdom on keeping his family, the children of Israel, and the whole nation alive during that time. He stored grain that would keep them through seven years of famine. The people of Egypt spent all their money on Joseph's stored-up grain for bread, then they sold their flocks and herds, their land, before finally selling themselves and their children to survive the seven years of famine. The whole country expressed their thanks to Joseph and Pharaoh, being glad that they were now servants: **“And they said, “You have saved our lives; may it please my lord, we will be servants to Pharaoh” (Genesis 47:25).** Have you ever heard of Klaus Schwab, the head of the World Economic Forum, that meets with the world's so-called elite at Davos, Switzerland to discuss global economic and social issues with 3,000 business leaders, political leaders, economists, celebrities and journalists? Klaus Schwab has written a book called

⁵ Key Word Study Bible, AMG Publishers, Page 192 in the New Testament Lexical Aids.

⁶ https://christsbondservants.org/Key_Issues/wys-Key%20Two%20Powerful%20Warnings%20To%20USA.pdf

The Great Reset. He said by 2030, “You’ll own nothing, and you’ll be happy about it.” It kinda sounds like what the Egyptians said to Pharaoh, doesn’t it?⁷ Conditions are being manipulated by those who control things behind the scenes to bring about energy and food collapse. Unless things turn around soon, their plan is that many people will sell themselves, take the Mark, and worship the man who will be the Pharaoh of the world to feed their families. Just because they plan to do, this does not mean that it is yet allowed by God. God is working out His plan and He has not left us. He has always got a people He will preserve and bring through with great victory, just as Israel had a great deliverer who delivered them from bondage.

Pestilences (Luke 21:11)

Revelation 6:5-8 says that among other signs of Christ's soon-coming, many will die due to famines and plagues. Luke also writes of pestilences (Luke 21:11) that cause fearful events and great signs from heaven. We don’t know if what we are seeing today is the pestilence mentioned by Luke, but it could be a sign from God to wake us up to the reality that this world is not all there is and that we are to prepare ourselves for the coming of our King. The word pestilence comes from the Greek word "*loymos*," which means plague, a fatal epidemic disease.

Matthew adds more words about the signs that should wake us from spiritual slumber. He speaks about the signs being the beginning of birth contractions:

⁷“Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. ⁸All these are the beginning of birth pains” (Matthew 24:7-8).

Question 3) What do you think Jesus refers to with the analogy of a woman in birth pains? (v. 8).

When a pregnant woman begins the birthing process, the pain is not severe, and the birth contractions are several minutes apart. The closer she gets to the child's birth, however, the more frequent the contractions are, with the pain level much more significant. In using this analogy, Jesus was saying that the closer the world gets to the end of the age, the more frequent the wars, revolutions, famines, pestilences, and earthquakes will be. Just as a woman's contractions get more painful, so will the amount of pain, anguish, sickness, and death of many on planet Earth. The wars and revolutions will be very severe, with much loss of life. Matthew writes that Jesus said:

If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened (Matthew 24:22).

It will be cut short by the appearance of our Lord Jesus. He will come for those who are His. What does all this mean for you and me? It is time to make sure that we belong to Christ so that, when He comes, we will not be ashamed at His coming. We are living in awesome days, but we need not be afraid. We should look forward to the time when Christ returns. Confidence and peace fill all who are in Christ, and understand that He holds all world events in His hands along with our

⁷ <https://www.armstrongeconomics.com/world-news/conspiracy/klaus-schwab-says-you-will-own-nothing-in-10-years/>

own lives. In light of this, we do not need to hold tightly to the things of this world. God is in control, and we must remind ourselves of this.

In a parallel passage to Luke spoken at the same time, Matthew gave us seven woes that Jesus said about the religious leaders, ending with the Lord saying these words:

³⁷"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing. ³⁸Look, your house is left to you desolate. ³⁹**For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say,** 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord'" (Matthew 23:37-39).

We are living in a time when that prophecy is being fulfilled. There are now 200 congregations of Messianic believers in the land of Israel. Jesus said He would not come again until the Jewish people welcomed him. How exciting to live in a time when many in Israel are reaching out to their Messiah!

Even though there are dark times before the end, it is not all bad news. The darkness will not overcome the light. The Scriptures give us light as to what will happen in the last days:

Peter addressed the crowd on the days of Pentecost, saying,

In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions; your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy (Acts 2:17-18).

Despite what we may go through in this lifetime, I want to end with another quote Peter offered to the crowd on the day of Pentecost as he echoed the words of David, saying:

I saw the Lord always before me. Because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore, my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices, my body also will live in hope, because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay. You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence (Acts 2:25-28).

Peter told the crowd that this verse pointed ahead to speak of Jesus of Nazareth. He made way for you and me so we can also quote this verse and hold on to it in times of trouble. God has made known to us the paths of life! He has promised us joy in His presence and will never leave or forsake us. We can trust that He is in control, regardless of what we see around us. We say, "Lord, we trust you! Because You are at my right hand, I will not be shaken!"

Prayer: Father, as we see the unfolding events of this world, help us not to be troubled but, instead, live each day to the fullest. Help us to take each day as it comes and do our best to follow You. We want to focus on essential things, i.e., those things that have eternal value. We say, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord" Amen.

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